DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 301 CG 029 512

AUTHOR Baker, Tamara; Boyd, Cynthia
TITLE A Program on Preventing Sexual Assault Directed toward Greek Leaders.
PUB DATE 1999-10-00
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; College Programs; *Fraternities; Higher Education; *Leaders; *Prevention; Program Development; *Rape; *Sexual Abuse; *Sororities; Student Attitudes; Values
IDENTIFIERS *Assaults

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses a program that uses the leadership and status of Greek system officers to prevent sexual assault at a large university. This program aims to prevent future assaults by altering the conditions of a rape-prone culture. The presentation comprises a definition and two examples of acquaintance rape situations, a discussion of conditions that foster a rape-prone culture, examination of personal attitudes and values about sexual assault, and specific suggestions for changing the conditions in Greek organizations and on campus that foster such a rape-prone culture. Greek leaders and college administrators in attendance provide positive feedback. The prevention program is now being offered by the student group that deals with sexual assault issues and education, in addition to its usual safety-oriented programs. (Contains 11 references.) (MKA)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 434 301



# A Program on Preventing Sexual Assault Directed Toward Greek Leaders

Tamara Baker, Ph.D.

Hood College

Cynthia Boyd, Ph.D.

University of Illinois at Chicago

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Baker

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CG029512

Running head: PREVENTING SEXUAL ASSAULT



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

The goal of this program was to utilize the leadership and status of Greek system officers to prevent sexual assault at a large university. What makes this program different is the emphasis on prevention of future assaults by altering the conditions of a rape-prone culture. The components of the presentation were: 1) a definition and two examples of acquaintance rape situations; 2) a discussion of conditions that foster a rape-prone culture; 3) examination of personal attitudes and values about sexual assault; and 4) presentation of specific suggestions for catalyzing change in their organizations and on campus with respect to the conditions that foster such a rape-prone culture.

A Program on Preventing Sexual Assault

Directed Toward Greek Leaders

The Problem

Awareness of the high incidence of sexual assault on campus has increased dramatically since the publication of Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewki's (1987) article about the problem. A large number of sexual assaults are associated with the Greek system (Sanday, 1990), and this happened to be the case on our campus. Rather than address the issue through traditional safety-oriented programs for potential victims (DiLapi & Wells, 1988), we decided to approach it in a prevention-oriented manner that tapped into the leadership potential of Greek officers. Our goal was to find a way to utilize their leadership and status as role models, as peer intervention has often been cited as an effective approach to impacting students' attitudes (Zimelis, 1998). What makes this program different is the emphasis on prevention of future assaults *by altering the conditions of a rape-prone campus culture*. The components of the presentation were: 1) a definition and two examples of acquaintance rape situations; 2) a discussion of conditions that foster a rape-prone culture; 3) examination of personal attitudes and values about sexual assault; and 4) presentation of specific suggestions for catalyzing change in their organizations and on campus with respect to the conditions that foster such a rape-prone culture.

The Program

We began by illustrating that issues of sexual assault and acquaintance rape are complex and confusing. To do so, we shared the true stories of two individuals- a man who later realized

he had perpetrated acquaintance rape and a woman who later realized she had experienced it. For clarification, these were followed by specific definitions of acquaintance rape and sexual assault.

We then moved into the main emphasis of the presentation which focused on precipitants to sexual assault, emphasizing the sociocultural components of sexual assault (see Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). We challenged the cultural norms on campuses of utilizing objectifying language, equating dating success with sexual conquest, and the devaluation of much needed self-reflective activities (Heider, 1985). On a more personal level, we encouraged the participants to explore their values and behaviors through the administration of a brief values assessment survey followed by discussion. Specifically, they were urged to note inconsistencies between cultural norms and their values, as well as between their values and behavior.

We concluded the presentation with suggestions for catalyzing change. The first suggestion was to display consistency between words and actions in order to be seen as an effective, trustworthy leader (Heider, 1985). We illustrated the tendency to verbally endorse respectful behavior coupled with nonverbal acceptance of assault conducive language or actions. The second was to adopt a grassroots approach in finding one or two others who believed as they did and to count on them to support the leader when s/he confronted others who used objectifying language or behaved in a sexually hostile or threatening manner. The third suggestion was to encourage discussion by setting up a specific time during their weekly meeting to talk about the issues we presented and to then have a joint discussion with a Greek organization of the other gender. Finally, gender specific suggestions were presented. For women, these included being assertive about boundaries, keeping in mind that nonverbal actions can be misinterpreted,

knowing that drug and alcohol use are often related to acquaintance rape (Wilenchek, 1998; Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, & Castillo, 1994), trusting their "gut" feelings, and learning to take care of themselves rather than assuming others will have their best interests in mind. For men, the suggestions were that they never assume anything and clarify mixed messages, listen to and respect their partner, recognize that intoxication is no excuse, not confuse "scoring" with having a successful social encounter, and communicate with many different women and men because it is harder to objectify another if you recognize and empathize with the person's inner self (Deutsch & Madle, 1975). The presentation was concluded with referrals to campus resources to help them deal with issues around sexual assault.

Programs of this type have been found through meta-analysis to be effective in reducing rape-supportive beliefs (Flores & Hartlaub, 1998). While we did not do a formal assessment of the impact on participants' attitudes, positive feedback was given verbally by the Greek leaders and college administrators in attendance. We were also invited to repeat the presentation to several Greek organizations, indicating that the Greek leaders valued our message. This prevention program is now being offered by the student group which deals with sexual assault issues and education, in addition to their usual safety-oriented programs.

References

Brownmiller, S. (1975). Against our will: Men, women, and rape. NY: Simon and Schuster.

Burt, M. R. (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38, 217-230.

DiLapi, E. M., & Wells, R. S. (1988). Responding to rape: the Penn experience. Presented at The Second National Conference on Campus Violence. Towson, MD.

Deutsch, F., & Madle, R. A. (1975). Empathy: Historic and current conceptualizations, measurement, and a cognitive theoretical perspective. Human Development, 18, 267-287.

Flores, S. A., & Hartlaub, M. G. (1998). Reducing rape-myth acceptance in male college students: A meta-analysis of intervention studies. Journal of College Student Development, 39(5), 438-439.

Heider, J. (1985). The tao of leadership: Leadership strategies for a new age. NY: Bantam Books.

Koss, M.P., Gidycz, C.A., & Wisniewski, N. (1987). The scope of rape: Incidence and prevalence of sexual aggression and victimization in a national sample of higher education students. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 35(2), 162-170.

Sanday, P. R. (1990). Fraternity gang rape: Sex, brotherhood, and privilege on campus. NY: New York University Press.

Wechsler, H., Davenport, A., Dowdall, G., Moeykens, B., & Castillo, S. (1994). Health and behavioral consequences of binge drinking in college. Journal of the American Medical

Association, 272(21), 1672-1677.

Wilenchek, S. (1998). Sexual assault: Creating effective programs. The Peer Educator, 21, 4, 13.

Zimelis, A. (1998). Prevention programs: Student involvement is fundamental. The Peer Educator, 20(9), 3, 10-11.